

# Little River District Newsletter

March 2024

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*The views contained herein reflect the views of the individual School Board member who is the publisher of this newsletter and may not reflect the views of the Loudoun County School Board and/or Loudoun County Public Schools.*

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## The Promise of Spring

I am very much looking forward to Spring Break – as I’m sure that pretty much all students, educators, and staff are, too. I hope that we all have a restful and restorative week!

As I continue to visit and learn about the Little River District schools, this month Chief of Staff Dr. Daniel Smith and I visited Stone Hill Middle School in Ashburn. We met with Principal Rohini Tohan, and she gave us a tour, which included the chance to observe an 8th Grade Science class in action! Principal Tohan also gave us a history of the school and shared some data about student enrollment and successes. I am excited to continue meeting with our great students and educators in their schools!



I am also hopeful that we can all take the time to focus on our health and safety, each and every day. Over the past few weeks, I’ve met and worked with committees that are tackling various health and safety issues in our schools, including hate speech incidents, opioid education, and illness prevention.

While so many of these issues are both serious and potentially dangerous, I am encouraged by the outreach and intervention opportunities available in our communities. Keep reading this newsletter to learn more about resources such as in-school Equity Leads, opioid awareness events, the

Mobile Health Clinic, and more. You can also follow me on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X/Twitter](#) for information and announcements between monthly newsletters.

As we welcome the spring season of renewal, please remember that at least one thing will remain the same: I always look forward to hearing from you! Please feel free to [contact me](#) if I can be of any assistance as your Little River District School Board Member.

*Dr. Sumera Rashid*  
*School Board Member, Little River District*

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## Important Dates

**Wednesday, March 20:** [Superintendent Community Listening Session](#), Heritage High School **AND** [Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee \(MSAAC\) General Body Meeting](#), LCPS Administration Building

**Monday, March 25 through Friday, March 29:** [Student Holidays](#) (Spring Break)

**Thursday, April 4:** End of 3rd Grading Period **AND** [Superintendent Community Listening Session](#), Briar Woods High School

**Friday, April 5:** [Student Holiday](#)

**Tuesday, April 9:** [Second Tuesday School Board Meeting](#), LCPS Administration Building

**Wednesday, April 10:** [Student Holiday](#) (Eid al Fitr)

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## Proclamations for March 2024

LCPS has adopted several important proclamations this month, which include:

- National Social Work Month recognizes the vital role that School Social Workers play as catalysts in helping to create an environment that is conducive to effective problem solving and learning for the whole child.

## Loudoun County Public Schools



### PROCLAMATION

#### National Social Work Month - March 2024

**WHEREAS**, school social workers are employed in schools to enhance the academic mission by providing services to address barriers to learning and help students reach their full potential; and

**WHEREAS**, school social workers are actively committed to helping students explore individual and collective abilities, strengths, interests, and talents utilizing research-based interventions and promoting education equity; and

**WHEREAS**, school social workers help parents focus on ways to further the educational, personal, and social growth of their children by strengthening the link between school, family, and the community; and

**WHEREAS**, school social workers bring unique professional knowledge and mental health perspective to school personnel and families to aid in identifying students experiencing academic challenges due to social-emotional and/or behavioral difficulties; and

**WHEREAS**, school social workers contribute to prevention and intervention services by providing comprehensive assessments and screenings, program development, individual and small group counseling services; crisis intervention, consultation, collaboration, and restorative practices to reduce barriers to learning for students; and

**WHEREAS**, school social workers should be recognized for the vital role they play as catalysts in helping to create an environment that is conducive to effective problem solving and learning for the whole child.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Loudoun County School Board proclaims that March 2024 is declared as National Social Work Month.

- Arts in Our Schools Month celebrates the lasting positive impact of Fine Arts education on the academic, personal, and professional growth of our students.

Loudoun County Public Schools



PROCLAMATION

Arts in Our Schools Month  
March 2024

**WHEREAS**, *Music in Our Schools Month*, *Youth Art Month*, and *Theatre in Our Schools Month* are integral opportunities for our community to celebrate the importance of Fine Arts in our schools; and

**WHEREAS**, the purpose of this celebration is to raise awareness of the lasting positive impact of Fine Arts education on the academic, personal, and professional growth of our students; and

**WHEREAS**, Fine Arts education shapes the way our students understand themselves and the world around them, contributing to deeper learning opportunities for all students; and

**WHEREAS**, Fine Arts education develops students as global citizens valuing diverse perspectives and beliefs; and

**WHEREAS**, Fine Arts education develops students' creative thinking, expressive communication, collaborative spirit and critical thinking as part of the Profile of a Graduate; and

**WHEREAS**, Fine Arts education acknowledges the arts as a powerful tool to unlock the potential of the whole child; and

**WHEREAS**, Fine Arts education empowers students to transfer skills across multiple content areas; and

**WHEREAS**, Fine Arts education significantly enhances the morale and quality of the school culture; and

**WHEREAS**, our Fine Arts educators continue to demonstrate dedication to their students, creativity and resilience, providing quality and meaningful Fine Arts education.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Loudoun County School Board proclaims March 2024 as ARTS IN OUR SCHOOLS MONTH in Loudoun County, Virginia.

- Equity in Education Month highlights the efforts of LCPS to ensure a culturally responsive learning environment for each and every student and employee, as well as to identify and remove barriers to increase greater access to learning and achievement throughout the school division.





## Loudoun County Public Schools Proclamation

### Proclaiming March as Virginia School Boards Association Equity in Education Month

**WHEREAS**, inequities in schools have become an increasingly significant challenge in the United States and Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, we recognize that factors including, but not limited to, ability, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status have a demonstrated history of impacting the educational opportunities provided to a student; and

**WHEREAS**, the promise of public education is for every child to be successful in school and life; and

**WHEREAS**, it is important for Loudoun County Public School families, students, teachers, and school administrators to be aware of the diverse needs of learners, and to encourage discussion of the challenges as a school community; and

**WHEREAS**, the Loudoun County School Board has established an Equity Committee, composed of various internal and community-based stakeholder groups, and charged with making recommendations for policies to support the creation of a culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and sustaining, school system; and

**WHEREAS**, we recognize that inequities in resources, information, educational settings, access to programs, and pathways, impede student learning; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to ensuring a culturally responsive learning environment for each and every student and employee, Loudoun County Public School is committed to identifying and removing barriers to increase greater access to learning and achievement throughout the school division;



## Loudoun County Public Schools Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, the school division continues to collaborate and partner with various community-based individuals and organizations to further its efforts of forming strong relationships in a culturally sensitive, responsive, and appropriate way; and

**NOW, THEREFORE**, Be it resolved, the Loudoun County Public Schools recognizes the month of March as Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), Equity in Education Month, with the intention that educational equity, stronger equitable practices, and access and opportunity become an integral part of the local day-to-day dialogue with the goal of equitable change in LCPS communities and classrooms.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Loudoun County School Board issues this proclamation to proclaim March as Virginia School Boards Association Equity in Education Month.

- Women's History Month focuses on the critical role of education in the history of American women.



LCPS March 2024 PROCLAMATION  
PROCLAIMING THE CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH IN MARCH 2024

WHEREAS, in 1909, the first Women's Day took place as a national observance; and

WHEREAS, the first National Women's History Week Proclamation, March 2-8, 1980 was signed by President Jimmy Carter; and

WHEREAS, especially during Women's History Month, we celebrate the many achievements and contributions made by women to the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States' economic, cultural, spiritual, and political development; and

WHEREAS In 2023 eighteen women sought local public office in Loudoun County with thirteen being victorious to include eight new members of the Loudoun County School Board; and

WHEREAS, American women of every race, class, and ethnic background have made historic contributions to the growth and strength of our Nation in countless recorded and unrecorded ways; and

WHEREAS, American women have served our country courageously in the military; and

WHEREAS, American women have played and continue to play critical economic, cultural, and social roles in every sphere of the life of the Nation by constituting a significant portion of the labor force working inside and outside of the home; and

WHEREAS, 48.6 percent of enrolled Loudoun County Public Schools students for the 2023-2024 school year are female; and

WHEREAS, 77.3 percent of the Loudoun County Public Schools' workforce for the 2023-2024 school year are women; and



WHEREAS, 98.9 percent of female students in the 2023-2024 four-year cohort graduated on time compared to 98 percent for all students; and

WHEREAS, American women of every race, class, and ethnic background served as early leaders at the forefront of major progressive social change movements; not only in securing their own rights of suffrage and equal opportunity, but also in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, the industrial labor movement, the civil rights movement, and others; and

WHEREAS, despite these contributions, the role of American women in history has been consistently overlooked and undervalued, in the literature, teaching and study of American history; and

WHEREAS, during Women's History Month, we focus on the critical role of education in the history of American women;

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the Loudoun County School Board, do hereby proclaim March 1 through March 31, 2024 to be WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH in Loudoun County Public Schools. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Loudoun County School Board strongly encourages our staff and community to observe, recognize, and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of women to our country, the Commonwealth of Virginia, our beautifully diverse county, and our schools during the month of March and throughout the school year.

*Photo Credits: 2/27/24 School Board Meeting documents*

[Social Work Month](#)

[Arts in Our Schools Month](#)

*3/12/24 School Board Meeting documents*

[Equity in Education Month](#)

[Women's History Month](#)

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## Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Women's History Month Proclamation

Earlier this month, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors honored local organizations, staffers, and elected officials as part of their Women's History Month Proclamation, given by Chair Phyllis Randall. I was honored to be in attendance, along with Dr. Linda Deans (Broad Run District School Board Member) and April Chandler (Algonkian District School Board Member), in celebration of women's impact and contributions in Loudoun County.

Happy Women's History Month!

*Below photos courtesy of the office of Supervisor Sylvia Glass,  
Broad Run District*



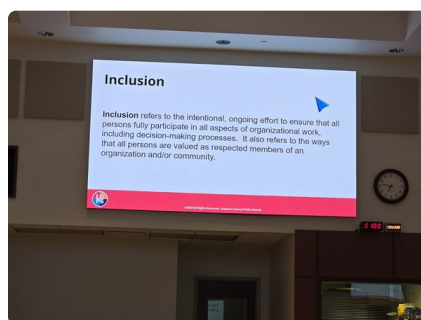
## MSAAC February Meeting

Last month, I joined my first [Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee](#) meeting as their School Board liaison. The theme of that meeting was "You are welcome here," and it set the tone for some important updates and discussions:

- The Delegate Spotlight shone on Tonia Bledsoe, who talked about the toolkit that she is creating to help share MSAAC information more widely.
- MSAAC now welcomes new Student Delegates to the committee.
- Shahid Muhammad, a Supervisor in the [Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility](#), presented information about the department, featuring working definitions of each principle.
- In groups, we talked about the importance of DEIA to our MSAAC Delegates. Helpful suggestions from meeting participants included more access to School Equity Lead contact information and deeper collaboration between the Equity Committee, in-school Equity Leads, and the MSAAC Committee.
- There are one or two Equity Leads in each LCPS school. Here is a current [list of LCPS Equity Leads](#). They are staff members who work with principals to determine the schools' priorities. For example, they may work with their school's Muslim Student Association ahead of Ramadan to find out how the school can create a supportive environment in which these students can thrive. The Equity Leads meet with one another monthly.
- Other updates included information about family engagement in schools, hate speech incidents, the student voice, and how schools promote opportunities and unity.



I can't wait to be a part of the future of MSAAC. Please don't hesitate to [reach out to me](#) with suggestions. I am always listening and looking for ways to expand the work!



## School Health Advisory Board February Meeting

I serve as School Board Liaison for the School Health Advisory Board, a student, health professional, educator, staff, and community committee focused on health policy, services, and education in our schools. This Advisory Board meets three times per school year.

In the February 26, 2024 meeting, Jennifer Evans, Director of Student Mental Health Services, reviewed the January Mental Health and Wellness Conference, which welcomed about 550 attendees. She also talked about the expanded and creative ways that LCPS is working to educate students and families about opioid risks, including school presentations and assemblies in partnership with [Song for Charlie](#), a national family-run nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness about "fentapills" — fake pills made of fentanyl.

Supervisor of Student Health Services Jeannie Kroman also provided information about the thousands of encounters and visits with LCPS School Health Offices, vision and hearing screening clinics, and the [Mobile Health Clinic](#). Several of these initial encounters resulted in referrals to physicians, therapists, and dentists for further diagnostics and/or treatments.

Additionally, updates are coming to policies for in-school allergy protection procedures and student medication administration. Plus, we're looking forward to school-based immunization clinics, which will provide immunizations for students in economic need.

Finally, we heard from community healthcare professionals about the country's current measles outbreaks. It's important to know that the virus can remain in airspace for up to two hours, and

those who have contracted measles can be contagious four days before showing symptoms. These symptoms include fever and rash, which unfortunately can signal various illnesses, so diagnosis may not move quickly enough to prevent further exposure and spread. If you have not been vaccinated ahead of exposure, you may be able to be vaccinated and protected up to three days post-exposure; however, standard vaccination protocol may offer the best protection.

As of the end of February, measles cases had been reported in many areas along the East Coast, including in Virginia. You can visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Measles Outbreaks page](#) for weekly updates.

I encourage you to use good habits, such as hand-washing, healthy eating, and regular exercise, to stay as healthy as possible!

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## Henrietta Lacks Elementary School Opening Update

At the February 27, 2024 School Board Meeting, we held space for the community to provide further public comment regarding rezoning and the opening of the new Henrietta Lacks Elementary School. We did not have any speakers sign up to share their thoughts.

When the Action Item regarding the fall opening of the new school came up in the agenda, we heard from Chief Operations Officer Kevin Lewis about a few options for attendance zoning. He shared some of the feedback from the February 7 Community Meeting at Hovatter Elementary, and he shared the ways that different options may affect class sizes and classroom use – including a potential shortage of classrooms.

Additionally, I inquired about inclusive playground access to find out if the new elementary school would provide appropriate accessibility for special needs students. Mr. Lewis pointed out that the new Henrietta Lacks ES playground would actually be more inclusive than the existing Hovatter ES playground, and that the Hovatter ES playground will be slated for updates. I also asked about bus transportation, hoping that we could avoid too-early morning pickup times and overly-lengthy bus trips. Mr. Lewis said that the aim of the Transportation Department is to have all bus routes pick up at times that will allow them to arrive at school between 5 and 20 minutes before morning bell. This will be the goal for Hovatter, Henrietta Lacks, and all LCPS schools.

Finally, I acknowledged the Hartland Community's struggles with schooling versus development, such that they have repeatedly faced a lack of facilities and infrastructure that matches pace with the residential development in the area. Mr. Lewis noted that development is happening based on zoning that may be effectively outdated, which has not allowed LCPS to be as responsive as they would like.

While this leaves some LCPS families in markedly less than ideal situations regarding repeated school rezoning, I hope that we can look toward addressing the larger problem of high-pace development in the Little River District and in Loudoun County as a whole.

Ultimately, the Board voted unanimously for the zoning plan which places grades 3 - 5 at Hovatter Elementary School and grades K - 2 (along with any Pre-K students) at Henrietta Lacks Elementary

School beginning in the Fall of 2024.

We are aware that this solution pleases some LCPS families and not others, but it is ultimately what the two buildings can best accommodate.

You can see the options presented to the Board in the 11.01 Action Item in the [agenda and documents for the February 27, 2024 School Board Meeting](#).

I deeply appreciate hearing from all constituents who shared their thoughts during this process, and I look forward to a great start of the next school year for all Little River and Loudoun schools!

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## Specialized Programs and Centers Committee March Meeting

This month, the Specialized Programs and Centers Committee, of which I am Chair, learned about some exciting upcoming developments for LCPS.

LCPS has been approached by George Mason University (GMU) about joining them as a collaborative partner for a [College Partnership Laboratory School \(Lab School\)](#), [ACCESS Academy](#). This program would provide innovative educational experiences for students that will lead to certifications and two- and four-year degrees, as well as support students with access to high-demand and well-compensated jobs in the information technology fields. In a proposed pilot school year, starting in 2025, this program will focus on 11th and 12th graders who may not have traditional or conventional opportunities for higher education in IT fields. Specific criteria are still being explored. The lab school will be located on a campus in Loudoun County. Look for more information as the approval and planning processes continue to move forward.

We also learned about different options for bringing the [LCPS Early Childhood Education select school-led learning labs](#) into alignment with Virginia Code. There have been some inconsistencies from school to school within this program, and currently there are two options for moving forward. One option will centralize them under [Starting Towards Excellence in Pre-School \(STEP\)](#). The second option would keep each lab under the auspices of each individual school, with the [Office of Career and Technical Education](#) providing support and training. I encourage you to [read more about these two presented possibilities](#) while feedback is gathered from LCPS school principals.

Finally, the committee voted to accept the Hillsboro Charter Academy and Middleburg Community Charter School calendars for the upcoming school year, and we began reviewing the Hillsboro Charter Academy application for charter agreement renewal, which must be completed every five years. This application and review process will continue in next month's SPC Committee meeting.

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## Stay in Touch

For up-to-date information on Board activities, Little River District news, and notable school accomplishments, please follow me on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X](#).



Have a question or comment? [Send me an email.](#)

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**Dr. Sumera Rashid**

Little River District School Board Member

